

Article links Copley to CIA; Copley execs issue denials

Penthouse Magazine in its August issue charges that the Copley Press, Inc. and its Copley News Service "acted as intelligence arms of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

The article by Joe Trento and Dave Roman says that the Copley News Service was "inspired" by a meeting between President Eisenhower and the late James S. Copley, publisher and owner of Copley Press, "for the purpose of supplementing CIA activity."

At a Washington news conference on publication of the magazine July 8, the two authors said their findings were the result of a year-long investigation of Copley Press via a \$2,000 grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism. A footnote at the end of the article states the investigation was made possible by the grant.

Subsequent to release of the article last weekend, Copley executives contacted by Editor & Publisher denied the charges.

The article says that Copley "volunteered" his newly formed news service as "the eyes and ears" against "the Communist threat in Latin and Central America" for "our intelligence services" and that at subsequent meetings other aides suggested that Copley News Service provide credentials for CIA and Defense Intelligence agents as "cover for our operatives."

Penthouse writes that meetings and phone calls led to full cooperation between Copley and "his privately held empire and the U.S. government at least until his death in 1973."

Penthouse says it learned from "very well placed CIA sources that no less than twenty-three Copley News Service employees had worked for the CIA simultaneously." The authors add that "out of 194 U.S. newsmen having CIA connections, CNS was the only organization that the CIA had 'full cooperation with' for nearly three decades." The writers did not identify the twenty-three employees but said the information came from secret documents.

Richard G. Capen Jr., senior vice-president of newspaper operations of Copley Press, La Jolla, California in denying the charges said they were "old allegations that Copley newspapers have repeatedly denied over the past two years."

One of the article's authors, Trento, lost a California primary election as a Congressional candidate last year and had voiced support for Copley organizations in his campaign.

Capen said of the allegation of linkage between the CIA and Copley newspa-

ers and Copley News Service, "We have been assured by the highest levels within the CIA that no employees of Copley newspapers or CNS have been employees of the agency."

Charles Ohl, who became editor and general manager of Copley News Service last January 1 after having joined the news service in 1964 in San Diego from United Press International, said that it was "conceivable" that part-time reporters in Latin America might have received money from local CIA station chiefs without knowledge of company executives. In the years he had been with Copley, Ohl said, he knew of no Copley

employees receiving any money from the CIA.

Ohl told Editor & Publisher he considered it "pretty poor journalism" when a reporter says 23 people did this or did that and refuses to name the people or offer any substantiating documents on the grounds it violates a confidence. He added he thought it also pretty poor journalism that "neither Mr. Trento or Mr. Roman ever contacted me at any time—never. And third, I would say consider the source of the attack. I'm not too concerned about being attacked by a magazine the calibre of Penthouse."

Ohl said that Trento several years ago "tried to persuade the *San Diego Union* to work with him on some editorial project" and was turned down and that Trento had made the magazine charges in his earlier political campaign and that Copley had denied all them at that time.